

HASHEM'S KINDNESS: EVERY DAY AND EVERY MINUTE¹

In the morning Hashem will make known the one who is His own (Numbers 16:5)

The best way for a person to develop humility before Hashem is by cultivating feelings of gratitude for the many good things Hashem does for him, every day and every minute. In the *sefer Chayei Olam* (The book of Eternal Life), written by the author of *Yad HaKetanah* ("The Little Hand") on the Rambam, the author encourages us to contemplate the great *chesed* that Hashem does by returning our souls each morning:

Have you ever paid attention—even once in all your life—that at the time when you are reciting the blessing ... *Who restores souls to dead bodies*, you should be contemplating the great kindness that Hashem does for you and praise and exalt Him from the bottom of your heart and from the depths of your mind?

Imagine that you had been ill with one of the diseases that a human body like yours is liable to suffer from, and you had suffered greatly from it, and the doctors had despaired of finding a cure, and you yourself had lost hope and despaired of your life, knowing full well that your time had come.

If a doctor would then come and say that he could heal you, you would give him everything you have, and you would gladly endure terrible suffering and cope with any hardship—even if your flesh were being cut from your body—with a tranquil spirit and with a joyous heart. But [imagine that] suddenly, a doctor would pass by and heal you free of charge, with sweet medicines and cures that are not painful, and would even grant you ... all the nourishment necessary to sustain your body.

How much would your heart burn with love for him for the rest of your life! It is indescribable! Although in truth, if you are wise, you would know that this doctor is but an emissary.

We have to remember that no one owes us anything. If we were given life as a gift, **we need to thank Hashem** for it. How great is our obligation to thank and praise our Creator for all of the many kindnesses, large and small, that He performs for us at every moment.

¹ Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, *Aleinu L'Shabeiach* ("It is our duty to praise"), *BaMidbar*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), pp. 299-301.

² Robert R. Gorelik, *Siddur Tefillat, Prayer Book*, (Eshav Books), p. 33.

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Our Sages composed various expressions of thanks to Hashem, such as *Modeh Ani*—*I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King for You have returned my soul within me ... We need to renew every day our appreciation and joy for Hashem's great kindness of returning our souls to our bodies.*

What happens when a person wakes up in the morning and one of Hashem's many kindnesses is lacking? Say, for instance, the person is missing his glasses. A minor inconvenience like that is enough to ruin his entire day.

Or say a person orders a suit for his son's wedding, and the tailor promises him that the suit will be ready with time to spare. But when the wedding day comes, the suit is still not ready. Perhaps the tailor was marrying off his own son and didn't have time to finish, or perhaps he contracted the flu and was confined to bed.

What terrible aggravation the customer will suffer! But when Hashem helps, and the glasses are in their place, or the suit is ready on time, it is so easy to forget that these things are great kindnesses from Hashem. **We need to remember not to take anything for granted, and to thank Hashem for everything He does for us.**

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The people who were murdered on the ill-fated #2 bus from the Kotel (Western Wall) in the summer of 5763/2003 could not have dreamed that they would find themselves in Heaven when their bus ride was over.

Just four hours before the terror attack, a 15-year-old boy named Binjamin Bergman *Hy"d*³ had received a certificate of excellence after having been tested on 70 folios of *Gemara*⁴. Just one hour before the attack, R' Yaakov Binder *Hy"d* had met several of the *gedolei Torah* in his neighborhood to discuss what to do about the problem of youth on the fringe.

None of the twenty-three victims imagined that this bus ride would be their last.

Events like this are a sharp reminder to us that **life does not always proceed the way we expect or want it to**. If Hashem allows us to return home in peace, if the suit we ordered is ready on time, if we find our glasses in the morning, we need to give thanks for it! And **we need to continually renew the thanks that we give Hashem.**

³ *Hy"d* (השם יקום דמו) ["May God avenge his blood"]—If someone is murdered or he died of an attack, then "hy"d" is added to his name, when his name is mentioned.

⁴ The *Gemara* is an essential component of the Talmud, comprising a collection of rabbinical analyses and commentaries on the *Mishnah*.

1. *Aleinu L'Shabeiach* (“It is our duty to praise”)

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to acclaim the greatness of the One who forms all creation. For God did not make us like the nations of other lands and did not make us the same as other families of the Earth. God did not place us in the same situations as others, and our destiny is not the same as anyone else's. And we bend our knees, and bow down, and give thanks, before the Ruler, the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed is God. The One who spread out the heavens, and made the foundations of the Earth, and whose precious dwelling is in the heavens above, and whose powerful Presence is in the highest heights. Adonai is our God, there is none else. Our God is truth, and nothing else compares. As it is written in Your Torah: "And you shall know today, and take to heart, that Adonai is the only God, in the heavens above and on Earth below. There is no other" (Deu 4:39).

Therefore we put our hope in You, Adonai our God, to soon see the glory of Your strength, to remove all idols from the Earth, and to completely cut off all false gods; to repair the world, Your holy empire. And for all living flesh to call Your name, and for all the wicked of the Earth to turn to You. May all the world's inhabitants recognize and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue must swear loyalty. Before You, Adonai, our God, may all bow down, and give honor to Your precious name, and may all take upon themselves the yoke of Your rule. And may You reign over them soon and forever and always. Because all rule is Yours alone, and You will rule in honor forever and ever. As it is written in Your Torah: "Adonai will reign forever and ever" (Exo 15:18). And it is said: "Adonai will be Ruler over the whole Earth, and on that day, God will be One, and God's name will be One" (Zech 14:9).

2. *Our Sages composed various expressions of thanks to Hashem, such as Modeh Ani*—I gratefully thank You, O living and eternal King for You have returned my soul within me ... *We need to renew every day our appreciation and joy for Hashem's great kindness of returning our souls to our bodies.*

a. A new day, new battles. Actually, one battle that assumes different forms: *I Want* vs. *I Should*. The day's first battlefield is your bed, and the first shot is fired when the alarm clock rings. *I Want* reaches out to hit the snooze button; *I Should* is ready to jump out of bed and take on another day.⁵

That's why the first instruction in the Code of Jewish Law is: “Be strong as a lion when you wake up in the morning to serve your Creator.” Because if you win this battle, the rest are lamb chops.

Here's some ammo for those early morning forays: Think how, every night, your soul ascends to heaven to recharge. This morning, G-d chose to return your soul to your body and grant you once again the gift of life—a sure sign that there's a little dark corner left in this world for you to come and illuminate. G-d trusts that you are up to the task.

b. The first words we say in the morning are *Modeh Ani*—literally translated as “Thankful am I”. The prayer is a statement that ‘I (Ani) give thanks (Modeh) to G-d.’⁶

But **why does it say Thankful am I and not I am thankful?** Wouldn't that make more sense? Why are the words switched?

The very first word that comes out of our mouths should be one of gratitude. We often spend the rest of our waking day focused on ourselves, our needs, our work. It is important to ensure that we never forget to have the foundation of our day be “Thank You,” acknowledging that whatever else comes in our day is from G-d. Only after that has been said do we mention ourselves.

We do not want the first word of our mouth in the morning focused on “I,” but rather shifting our perspective to one of gratitude and first saying “thank you.”

1) תודה אני אסיר תודה (*ani asir todah*)—*I am grateful, thankful.*

2) Rebbe Nachman: “The day you were born is the day Hashem decided that the world could no longer continue without you”

3. *If we were given life as a gift, we need to thank Hashem for it. How great is our obligation to thank and praise our Creator for all of the many kindnesses, large and small, that He performs for us at every moment.*

a. 2Chronicles 30:13-22

¹³A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. ¹⁴They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars ... ¹⁵They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the temple of the LORD. ¹⁶Then they took up their regular positions as prescribed in the Law of Moses the man of God. The priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them by the Levites. ¹⁷Since many in the crowd had not consecrated themselves, the Levites had to kill the Passover lambs for all those who were not ceremonially clean and could not consecrate their lambs to the LORD. ¹⁸Although most of the many people who came from **Ephraim, Manasseh,**

5 https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3725415/jewish/Modeh-Ani.htm

6 <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/416419?lang=bi>

Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone ¹⁹who sets their heart on seeking God-- the LORD, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary." ²⁰And **the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.**

²¹**The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem** celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days **with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day** with resounding instruments dedicated to the LORD. ²²Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the LORD. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings **and praised the LORD**, the God of their ancestors.

b. Isaiah 40:28

²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

c. Psalms 48:1

¹A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, **and most worthy of praise**, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

d. Psalms 96:4

⁴For great is the LORD **and most worthy of praise**; he is to be feared above all gods.

e. Psalms 145:1-3

¹A psalm of praise. Of David. I will exalt you, my God the King; **I will praise your name for ever and ever. ²Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.** ³Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

f. Job 5:9

⁹He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, **miracles that cannot be counted.**

1) *Nishmat Kol Chai* (The soul of every living being)

The soul of every living being shall bless Your Name, Hashem our G-d, the spirit of all flesh shall always glorify and exalt Your remembrance, our King. From this world to the World to Come, You are G-d and other than You we have no king, redeemer, or savior. He who liberates, rescues and sustains, answers and is merciful in every time of distress and anguish, we have no king, helper or supporter but You!

G-d of the first and the last, G-d of all creatures, Master of all Generations, Who is extolled through a multitude of praises,

Who guides His world with kindness and His creatures with mercy. Hashem is truth; He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He Who rouses the sleepers and awakens the slumberers. Who raises the dead and heals the sick, causes the blind to see and straightens the bent. Who makes the mute speak and reveals what is hidden. To You alone we give thanks!

Were our mouth as full of song as the sea, and our tongue as full of joyous song as its multitude of waves, and our lips as full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, and our eyes as brilliant as the sun and the moon, and our hands as outspread as the eagles of the sky and our feet as swift as hinds—**we still could not thank You sufficiently**, Hashem our G-d and G-d of our forefathers, and to bless Your Name for even one of the thousand and thousands of thousands and myriad myriads of favors, miracles and wonders that you performed for our ancestors and for us.

g. Romans 11:33

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! (Job 11:7).

4. *What terrible aggravation the customer will suffer! But when Hashem helps, and the glasses are in their place, or the suit is ready on time, it is so easy to forget that these things are great kindnesses from Hashem. We need to remember not to take anything for granted, and to thank Hashem for everything He does for us.*

a. Deuteronomy 8:10-14 (Deu 6:10-12)

¹⁰“And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless the LORD your God for the good land which he has given you. ¹¹**Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God ...** ¹²lest when you have eaten and are satisfied ... ¹⁴**then your heart becomes haughty and you forget the LORD your God ...**”

b. Psalms 103:2

²“Bless the LORD, O my soul, **and forget not all His benefits ...**”

c. Proverbs 3:6

⁶“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

d. Berachot 35a

“Anyone who benefits from this world without a blessing, it is as if he stole from God ...”—**reminding us to acknowledge God’s gifts through blessings.**

e. Pirkei Avot 3:7

“Rabbi Elazar of Bartota said: Give Him of His own, for you and yours are His. Thus David said: ‘For all things come from You, and from Your hand have we given You’ (1Chronicles 29:14).”

f. Midrash Tehillim (Psalms) 116

On the verse “What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits to me?”—the rabbi’s comment that **we must continually seek ways to express thanks and not presume upon God’s kindness.**⁷

g. Luke 17:15-18

In the account of the ten lepers healed by (Yeshua), only one returns to give thanks. (Yeshua) asks, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?”

1) This story underscores the expectation of conscious gratitude rather than taking God’s grace for granted.⁸

h. Romans 1:21

Paul warns that, “Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking ...”

1) **Ingratitude is here described as a root spiritual failure.**⁹

i. 1Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶“Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸**give thanks in all circumstances**; for this is the will of God in Messiah Yeshua for you.”

j. James 1:17

¹⁷“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights ...”

k. Hebrews 12:28

²⁸“Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.”

5. *Events like this are a sharp reminder to us that **life does not always proceed the way we expect or want it to.** If Hashem allows us to return home in peace, if the suit we ordered is ready on time, if we find our glasses in the morning, we need to give thanks for it! And **we need to continually renew the thanks that we give Hashem.***

a. Genesis 37-50 (The Joseph story)

Joseph’s life, from favored son to slave to ruler of Egypt, demonstrates that unexpected events can lead to unforeseen and ultimately positive outcomes.

1) Romans 8:28

²⁸“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him ...”

2) Berachot 60b

Rabbi Akiva would say: “All that God does is for the good.”

3) Even when events do not go as hoped, one is encouraged to trust in ultimate meaning beyond immediate understanding.

b. Proverbs 16:9

⁹“A person’s heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

c. Ecclesiastes 9:11

¹¹“I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise ... but **time and chance happen to them all.**”

d. Luke 12:16-21 (Parable of the Rich Fool)

¹⁹And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” ²⁰But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

²¹“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

1) Pirkei Avot 4:3

“Do not be sure of yourself until the day of your death ...”

e. James 4:13-15

¹³“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go ... ¹⁴Yet **you do not know what tomorrow will bring** ... ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

1) Luke 22:39-42

³⁹Yeshua went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; **yet not my will, but yours be done.**”

f. Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev (And he dwelt) 8

“Many are the thoughts in a person’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand” (Proverbs 19:21).

7 www.notion.com

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.